Jean-Michel René SOUCHE

Morikazu Kumagai and the cloisonné technique

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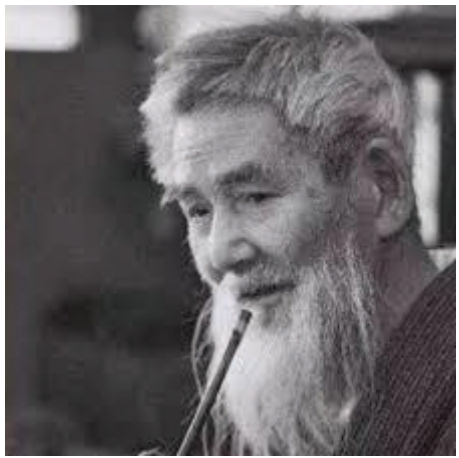
Morikazu Kumagai is a painter who has achieved a "fusion of the West and the East".

Mitsuru Moriyasu, Osaka



Morikazu Kumagai

熊谷 守一

Morikazu Kumagai is maybe one of the most fascinating artist of the XXth century.

During the 1940s, when he was around 60 years old, the artist slowly gave up the virtuosity to forge his very style : very simplified shapes, surrounded by outlines with flat pure colors. Kumagai's **pictorial technique** is the subject of this humble *étude*. In order to illustrate it, I chose the painting "Camellia", dating from 1972.

Camellia. 1972. Oil on Wood panel. 15.8 x 22.7 cm.

The *cloisonné* technique is very ancient. Archeologists found Mycenaean rings from graves in Cyprus, dating from the 12th century BC. The contour of the rings was made with thin wires. I will show that Morikazu Kumagai's pictorial technique entirely refers to the cloisonné technique as it can be found in jewelry, enamel or stained-glass artworks.

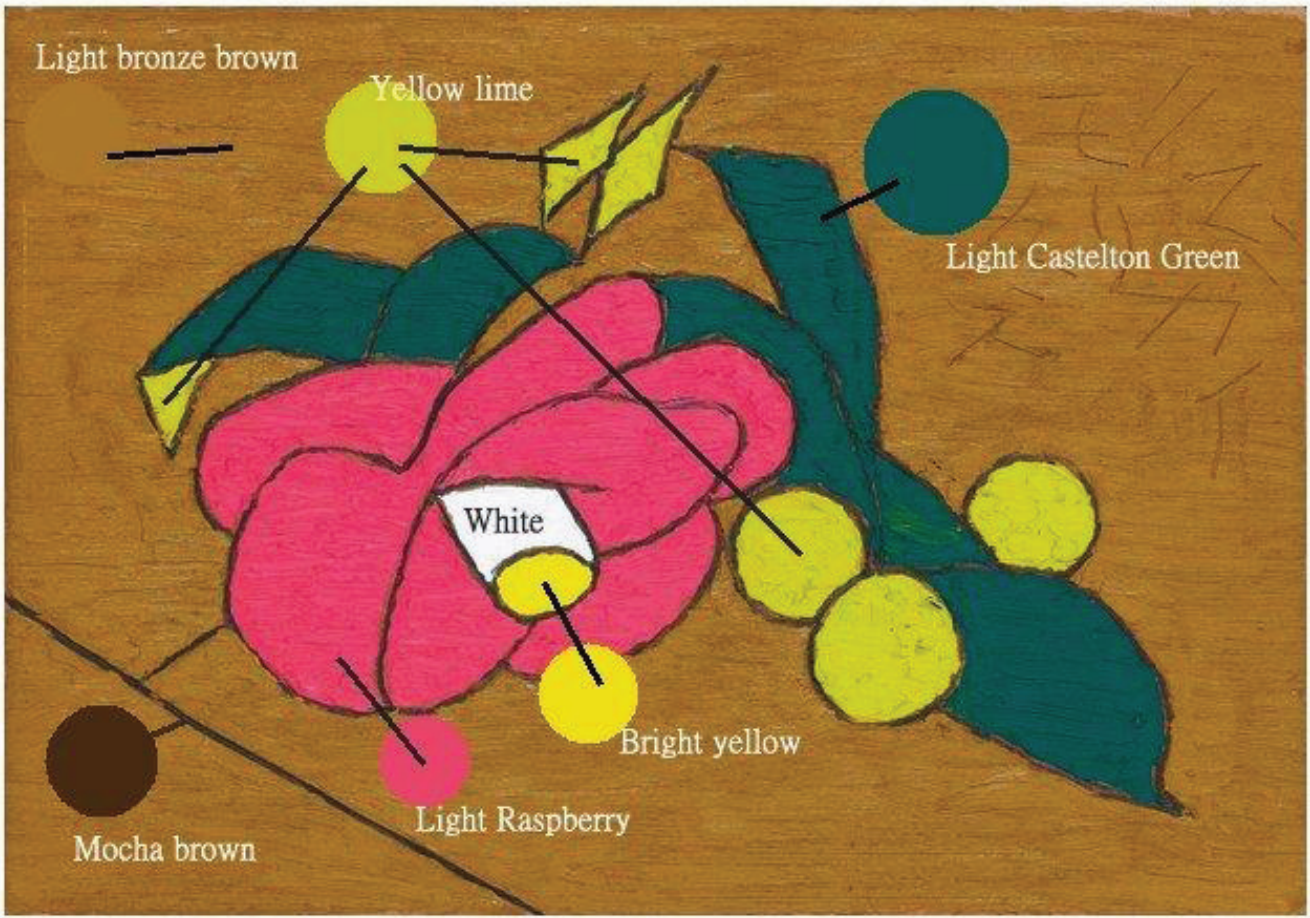
Here is an example of a basic **cloisonné technique**.

First, the relief contour draws the pattern, then each space is "filled" with liquid color.

Homemade cloisonné stained-glass.

I will study Kumagai's technique when it expresses itself on wood panel (he used mostly wood panels when it comes about oil painting), but the technique of the Master, when he uses linen canvas, is about the same. In his little painting "Camellia" - 15.8 x 22.7 cm - the artist uses only 7 pure colors :

- Light bronze brown (Background)
- Yellow lime (light) for the Flower buds, the two new leaves (and the back of one leaf)
- Bright yellow for the stigma
- White for the style of the Camellia itself
- Light Raspberry pink for the petals
- Light Castelton Green for the leaves
- Mocha brown for the contour


Light bronze brown
Yellow lime
Light Castelton Green
White
Bright yellow
Light Raspberry
Mocha brown

I can say – taking all the necessary precautions – that Morikazu used oil painting colors with very few mixing mediums. The main medium was certainly linseed stand oil and not turpentine, because the texture of the painting is thick, as one can see on this upper leaf of the camellia.